Digital good practice guidance

29/01/2024

See all updates

No matter the type or size of your heritage project, you will probably create some digital outputs. It’s important these meet the conditions of our funding: availability, accessibility and openness.

By reading this guidance you'll learn more about our funding requirements and how they vary depending on the size of your grant. These requirements help increase access to the UK’s rich heritage and promote the innovative use of digital across the sector.

We have lots more information and advice on how to make the most of digital technology, to make heritage more accessible and enjoyable, and to increase your project’s impact and reach. We link to that below. This guidance provides you with the basics.

About digital outputs

By ‘digital outputs’ we mean **anything created with project funding in a digital format that is designed to give access to heritage or to help people engage with and learn about heritage.**

It includes everything heritage related that is originally created in a digital format from environmental and geographic surveys and reports to educational material, visitor resources and digital display content. Your digital outputs might include:

- photographs, sound and video recordings
- electronic documents and databases
- website and app content
- software and code
- 3D models

What we expect

At the Heritage Fund, we’re committed to ensuring the greatest possible public, social and economic benefit from the work we fund. Digital skills and technology are a key part of our Heritage 2033 strategy and can support the investment principles that guide our decision making.

We want publicly funded digital heritage resources to be freely and openly accessible to the public, now and in the future. We therefore require people who receive our funding to meet our digital requirements on **availability**, **accessibility** and **openness**. These requirements will help ensure that the digital projects we fund deliver on our investment principles. Projects should outline how they plan to meet these requirements in their grant applications.

If you are planning to create digital resources with your grant you will need to:

- understand what each of our requirements mean

- include plans for meeting them (for example, through collecting relevant permissions) in your project plan
- include proportionate costs (for example, costs relating to hosting, accessibility checking or rights management) in your project budget

Availability

Your digital outputs must be available to the public with unfettered access for between five and 20 years from the project completion date, depending on the level of your funding:

- grants from £10,000 to £250,000 – outputs must be available for five years
- grants over £250,000 – outputs must be available for 20 years

You do not need to keep your resources up to date or host them yourself, but you must have a plan to ensure public access.

Digital accessibility

You need to adhere to recognized accessibility standards so that as many people as possible can access your digital outputs:

- grants from £10,000 and £250,000 – websites and website content must meet at least W3C Single A accessibility standard
- grants over £250,000 – websites and website content must meet at least W3C Double A accessibility standard

VocalEyes has produced a report and benchmarking tool to help organisations ensure their websites are accessible and inclusive.

For further information on online accessibility, see our digital guide: an introduction to online accessibility.

Openness

Unless there is a recognised exception (which we go into below) your digital outputs should be shared under an **open licence**.

An **open licence** gives upfront permission to access, re-use and share digital outputs as long as the terms of the licence are met. Your digital outputs will include images, research, educational materials, environmental reports, software, web and app content, databases, 3D models, and sound and video recordings.

The licence terms ensure due credit and recognition is given to the organisations and/or individuals responsible for creating the outputs, and to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for supporting the project.

Remote video URL

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Requirements

The Heritage Fund's default open licence is the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence (CC-BY 4.0). We will also accept the OGLv.3.0 or CC BY SA 4.0 licences.

Grantees must apply the open licence to the digital outputs they produce and make these resources publicly available for at least five years. Members of the public viewing your digital heritage materials should be easily able to see the CC-BY 4.0 licence badge and an attribution statement.

Metadata, data and code produced by the project should be shared under a Creative Commons 0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication (CC0 1.0) or an open software licence.

Species and habitat records collected during projects we fund must be shared with the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas and/or the Local Environmental Records Centre (LERC). Further information can be found on the NBN website and in our landscapes, seas and nature good practice guidance.

Works already in the public domain fall outside the scope of this requirement. To make sure these materials are not mistaken for copyrighted materials, we recommend you clearly identify public domain assets by using the CC0 1.0 dedication or equivalent. No new rights should arise from the reproduction of public domain works supported by our funding. Digital reproductions of public domain materials, including photographic images and 3D data, should be shared under the CC0 1.0 dedication.

Orphan works (where the copyright owner is either unknown or cannot be located) cannot be shared under an open licence.

An overview of open licences

There are a number of additional issues to be aware of, including copyright, ethics and GDPR, and we have more detailed information to help you:

- if you've never used open licences before, see our digital guide to working with open licences
- Grantees are responsible for collecting permission from third party rights holders, for example contractors or volunteers, to share digital outputs created for their project under an open licence. For advice on this, see our guide on creating digital resources: GDPR, copyright and using open licences

Recognised exceptions

For some projects alternative arrangements or exceptions to our default licence may be appropriate. We will always provide exceptions for digital outputs that:

- depict people who are currently under 18 years old
- include special category data, for example, in oral history interviews
- are produced by or depict adults at risk of harm

We encourage all projects to consider ethics in relation to copyright, licensing and cultural heritage management. For example, there may be reasonable objections to sharing the research, data and other media produced around spiritual works, funerary objects and human remains under an open licence.

Projects should raise issues they believe would prevent them openly licensing their digital outputs as early as possible in the application process, or, if currently receiving an award, with their Investment Manager.

Additional resources

We have supported a range of resources to help you deliver available, accessible, and open digital heritage.

The Heritage Fund-supported Digital Heritage Hub has answers to the sector's 100 most pressing and frequently asked digital questions.

Guides on how to use digital creatively, safely and effectively:

- Introduction to online accessibility
- Working with open licences
- Creating digital resources: GDPR, copyright and using open licences
- Online privacy and security
- Getting started with online learning
- Working safely online with children and young people
- Digitisation project planner, handbook and examples
- Doing digitisation on a budget

Digital leadership briefing:

- Artificial intelligence
- Open licences